

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, JACKSON, MISS.

JANUARY 19, 1897.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. COOPER, of Texas, from the Committee on War Claims, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 9789.]

The Committee on War Claims, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 9789) entitled "A bill for the relief of the Roman Catholic Church of Saint Peters, at Jackson, Miss.," beg leave to submit the following report, and recommend that said bill do pass, with an amendment.

The facts out of which this bill for relief arises will be found stated in House report from the Committee on War Claims of the Fiftieth Congress, a copy of which is hereto attached for information.

Your committee adopt the report as their own, and report back the bill and recommend its passage, with the following amendment:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

That the Secretary of War be, and he is hereby, authorized and directed to cause to be investigated by the Quartermaster's Department of the United States Army the circumstances, character, and extent of alleged destruction by the United States military authorities, during the late war, of the Roman Catholic church of Saint Peters, at Jackson, Mississippi, and to find and award and to certify to the Secretary of the Treasury what amount, if any, is equitably due from the United States as the reasonable value of said property alleged to have been destroyed; and that the Secretary of the Treasury be, and he is hereby, authorized and directed to pay to the person or persons authorized to receive and receipt for the same, the amount, if any, so found to be due from the United States: *Provided*, That the said sum be accepted in full payment of all claims against the United States in any manner arising out of the destruction of said property by the United States.

[House Report No. 4148, Fiftieth Congress, second session.]

The Committee on War Claims, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 11601) for the relief of Roman Catholic Church of St. Peters, at Jackson, Miss., have had the same under consideration and report the same back to the House with the recommendation that the same do pass.

The committee submit herewith the petition of Rev. Father Francis Orlandi, the priest in charge of said church and the pastor thereof, dated January 3, 1864, and the letter of Gen. William T. Sherman, dated Vicksburg, January 17, 1864, and the abstract of deposition of Dr. P. T. Bailey as to destruction of church in question, and substance of testimony of Herbert Spengler as to destruction and value of said church property; also the petition of certain citizens of Vicksburg, Miss., sworn to and verified before James Wilson, provost-marshal of Seventeenth Corps, January 15, A. D. 1864

Petition of Rev. Francis Orlandi to President Lincoln.

To His Excellency ABRAHAM LINCOLN, *President of the United States:*

The undersigned Catholic pastor of the parish of Jackson, in the State of Mississippi, represents, respectfully, that during the first occupancy of Jackson by the army

of General Grant, viz, on the 19th day of May, 1863, a frame building adjoining the Catholic church, and containing inflammable material, viz, tar and rosin, was set on fire and burned by order of the military authorities; that the undersigned, knowing the danger about to ensue to the church building, proposed to have the above-mentioned stores removed into the street within the space of fifteen minutes, that they might be destroyed with safety, said stores being also private and not public property; that the officer charged with the order positively refused to give one minute for the object proposed, and immediately had the building fired; that by necessary consequence the church, the pastor's residence, a contiguous schoolhouse, and the outbuildings on the premises were consumed; that on the reoccupation of Jackson by General Sherman another building, which had been fitted up at a considerable expense and trouble for the worship of the congregation, was also burned in a conflagration created by the soldiers, having first been desecrated and robbed; that the injury inflicted by these various losses can not be repaired for less than \$25,000.

Therefore, relying on the fact that this war is not one of religion or against religion, the undersigned prays that your excellency may give such orders in the premises as may enable him forthwith to reinstate the worship of God within his parish upon the same footing whereon it was found by your excellency's armies.

Very respectfully,

REV. FRANCIS ORLANDI, B. P.

JACKSON, MISS., *January 3, 1864.*

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE TENNESSEE,
Vicksburg, January 17, 1864.

The foregoing petition having been referred to me, I have to state that I was personally present in Jackson, Miss., on both occasions referred to. It was not the purpose of General Grant or myself to disturb the Catholic church or any other building dedicated to religious uses or charity; and it was reported to me that the church took fire by reason of accident and not design. On both occasions when the United States Army approached Jackson the town was found encircled by forts and defended by a hostile army.

On both occasions we had to take the place by battle, so that the whole town was our capture, and we can not recognize the right of reclamation for any damage done however wanton. But practice of United States authorities has ever been to respect all places of worship or charity, and at a proper time the Congress or the military authorities can make partial restitution. In due season we will embrace Jackson within our permanent military possession, when, if I am in command, I will cheerfully cause some other edifice in Jackson to be remodeled and placed at the free disposal of Father Orlandi, whom I recognize as a faithful priest of his Church, or by military assessments will collect the means of building another church.

At this time I can not recommend the building of any structure in Jackson, as, if resistance is made there a third time, we may feel ourselves compelled to destroy the whole town. I am willing this paper should go to his excellency the President of the United States, who deplures, I know, the ravages of war more than any man in America, and whose judgment may differ with mine in this case.

W. T. SHERMAN,
Major-General, Commanding.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *February 1, 1864.*

This paper has been presented and considered, and the views of General Sherman as to the obstacles ~~the claim~~ are concurred in.

EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

Abstract of testimony of Dr. P. T. Baley, of Jackson, Miss., sworn to and subscribed before John McGill, mayor of Jackson, on the 8th day of November, 1867.

Dr. Baley, practicing physician, over fifty years of age, and resident of Jackson, Miss., prior to and during civil war between the States, witnessed the burning of the Roman Catholic church at Jackson and a large warehouse adjoining it, the warehouse being the property of his father, S. P. Baley, filled at the time with three or four hundred barrels of spirits of turpentine. He was standing at the time in front of the two buildings. The Federal troops were about to evacuate the town of Jackson, and orders had been given to set fire to the turpentine; that this order caused some alarm among that portion of the troops who were Catholics; that the church and surrounding buildings caught fire from burning of warehouse adjoining thereto

Herbert Spengler, citizen of Jackson, Miss., prior to and during the war, deposes as follows, before John McGill, mayor of Jackson, the 19th day of —, 1887:

He was well acquainted with the church and contiguous buildings belonging to said church, which were destroyed by fire by Federal troops during an invasion of Jackson, Miss.; was present in Jackson when said property was destroyed; went to the fire, having been attracted by the smoke, and then found property hereafter named destroyed.

The main building, the Catholic church, and the sacristy attached to it; the residence of the priest, and the schoolhouse closely adjoining, and destroyed at same time by same fire.

The buildings were all in good repair and condition, were fully worth the following sums, and could not be replaced at present time for less:

The church was a frame building worth fully \$5,000; the sacristy, \$400; the schoolhouse, \$1,200. The priest's residence was a house of four rooms and gallery in front, worth \$1,200. The buildings were all in the same lot of ground, and situated very close together. These buildings were well furnished with the necessary fixtures suitable for such buildings, the pews in the church being worth \$250; an altar and railing and confessional being worth \$200.

When he reached the fire he found turpentine and rosin running in the streets. The church building was very close to warehouse of Dr. S. P. Bale. The soldiers then present stated to him that the church was set on fire by flames catching from the warehouse. The soldiers offered and desired to roll the barrels of turpentine away, but were prevented by the officers firing the warehouse.

VICKSBURG, *January 14, 1864.*

We, the undersigned, do certify and will testify with our most solemn oaths the facts set forth as follows:

That on the occasion of the occupation of Jackson, Miss., by the Federal Army under Major-General Grant, the Roman Catholic church, priest's residence, schoolhouse, and other buildings attached thereto were consumed in a fire set by order of the military authorities to a storehouse adjoining, containing inflammable material, viz, tar and rosin belonging to private parties. That this calamity could have been easily avoided by removing said tar and rosin to the public street and there destroying it; that there were present at the time officers of high rank in the Federal Army ready to take upon themselves the responsibility of destroying said tar and rosin by having it removed into the street and there destroying it without setting fire to the buildings.

That on the reoccupation of Jackson by the troops under Major-General Sherman, another building, fitted up at considerable expense for the worship of the congregation, was also burned in a conflagration created by Federal soldiers.

That the losses sustained by said Roman Catholic congregation can not be less than \$25,000; and, finally, that it is impossible for the poor congregation to procure a place convenient for worship unless the United States Government pay them an indemnification for the losses sustained by the destruction of their property.

JACK SANGUINETTI.
N. CHAS. SANGUINETTI.
J. J. THIBIS.
J. C. JOHNSON.
JOHN MAGRATH.
JOHN TIERNEY.

Witness to the above signatures:

JAMES WILSON,
Lieutenant-Colonel.

HEADQUARTERS SEVENTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
PROVOST-MARSHAL'S OFFICE,
Vicksburg, January 15, 1864.

The persons whose names are affixed to the statement on the face of this paper were duly sworn at the time of subscribing to the same, and produced evidence of their loyalty to the Government of the United States. They have all taken the oath of allegiance to the Government of the United States.

JAMES WILSON,
Lieutenant-Colonel, Provost-Marshal Seventeenth Army Corps.

